



More Than 30,000 Full-Time Carers Expected To Receive Increased And Extended €1,000 Respite Care Grant

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., today (Sunday, 1st May 2005) outlined full details of the increased and extended Respite Care Grant, which this year will entitle more than 30,000 full-time carers to a €1,000 payment in recognition of their valued role in society.

Minister Brennan announced that from this 2nd June the €1,000 Respite Care Grant will be extended to all carers providing full-time care and attention to an older person or a person with disability, regardless of their means. In addition the value of the grant has been increased from €835 to €1,000. The total cost of the expanded respite care package is expected to be €36 million.

More than 23,500 people in receipt of the Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit support schemes will receive the grant along with the anticipated 9,000 additional carers who will qualify in 2005 following the extension of the support measure.

The Minister has urged all full time carers who do not currently receive the annual Respite Grant, and who believe they may have an entitlement under the expanded scheme, to contact the Department of Social Affairs on its dedicated Respite Care Grant freephone help-line 1800 690 590, which will operate weekdays 9am to 5pm from this Tuesday, 2nd May to the 11th of May. Advertisements outlining the details of the grant and the qualifying conditions are appearing in the regional and national media.

Minister Brennan said: "Carers make a valued and valuable contribution to Irish society through their dedication and sacrifice. I want that work to be recognised and acknowledged through increased benefits and practical support measures. In this regard, a break from caring is one of the greatest needs identified by family carers. By increasing the Respite Care Grant to €1,000 and significantly expanding it to include thousands more recipients, we are going some of the way towards giving carers a badly needed break and also recognition for their commitment and compassion. I am committed to the cause of carers. Recent increases and supports have gone some considerable distance in responding to the specific requirements of carers. A lot has been done, but much more remains to be achieved before we can be satisfied that the needs of carers have been fully addressed."

The annual Respite Care Grant is now available to all full-time carers, subject to certain employment related conditions, and will not be means tested. This means that carers who previously did not receive the grant, for example because they did not satisfy the means test for Carer's Allowance, may now have an entitlement.

The grant is already paid automatically to carers in receipt of schemes such as Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit administered by the Department of Social and



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Family Affairs and Domiciliary Care Allowance, administered by the Health Service Executive. As in previous years, people receiving these payments do not need to apply for the grant, as they will automatically receive payment in early June.

This year Minister Brennan has provided additional funding of more than €33m in increased allowances and support measures for carers. Improvements include:

- Extension of the Respite Care Grant to all persons providing full-time care and attention to an older person or a person with a disability, subject to certain employment-related conditions.
- Increase in the Respite Care Grant from €835 to €1,000 in respect of each care recipient – making it four times higher than when first introduced in 1999.
- Carers providing care for more than two people will receive a grant in respect of each person for whom they are caring. Previously a maximum of two grants was payable irrespective of the number of people receiving care. These improvements for carers are effective from June 2005.
- Increase of €14 in the weekly rate of Carer's Allowance and the Carer's Benefit, from last January.
- Income limits for the Carer's Allowance expanded by increasing the weekly means test income disregards by €20 to €270 for a single person and by €40 to €540 for a couple so that all those on average industrial incomes can qualify. This means that a couple with two children can earn up to €30,700 and receive the maximum rate of Carer's Allowance while the same couple can earn up to €49,200 and receive the minimum rate of Carer's Allowance, Free Travel, the Household Benefits Package of Free Schemes and the Respite Care Grant. Effective from April 2005.
- Increase in the earnings limit for Carer's Benefit by €120 to €270 per week from April 2005.

The Respite Care Grant was first introduced in 1999 as an annual payment for Carers who look after certain people in need of full time care and attention. It empowers Carer's to choose the form of respite that best suits their own unique circumstances and supports them in continuing to provide care. In 2004, almost 21,000 carers received the Respite Care Grant, at a cost of €20 million

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